NCO Academy program welcomes civilian students

BY JENNIFER E. WEST

Nucleus staff writer

Standing at attention among the blue-suited Airmen during an open ranks uniform inspection, Marisa Quiterio stands out like a sore thumb with her street clothes and uncovered head. But "Ms. Q's" presence is neither a distraction nor a hindrance for her fellow students at the Kirtland NCO Academy.

"(On the first day) the curiosity of the other students was evident but not in a disrespectful manner," said Tech. Sgt. Elizabeth Sousa, academy instructor. "... She was put in the hot seat just like everybody else ... Ms. "Q" became one of the team ... her flight members embraced her from the very beginning."

The Nuclear Weapons Directorate federal civilian employee is the first civilian to attend the six-week academy at Kirtland AFB. She attended through a yearlong pilot program that allows civil service employees to learn the leadership principles, communications and personnel skills offered to NCO academy military students.

"I applied because I am always seeking ways to enhance my supervisory skills," Quiterio explained. "I was also told the course would be very challenging and I thought I could benefit from attending this course."

Only two civilians—another attends at Robins AFB, Ga.—were selected to attend the academy in a process that is open to government employees who are GS-7 to GS-9.

The aim of the program is to enhance the interaction of civilians and military members working together to accomplish their mission. The program also aims to help elevate the level of education of civilians needing to further their knowledge of leadership and communication for supervising military people.

"This is a great program and a step in the right direction," Chief Master Sgt. Steve Sargent, academy commandant, said, explaining the civilians had been a "blind spot" in training and had been neglected. "It's right on the money. I welcome (the program)."

Although Quiterio has been a government employee only a year, she has been in the Army Reserves since 1989. She served in an active Army unit in Belgium from 1990-1996. In January, after completing academy work, she will be activated in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

With her Army experience, the physical training or drills of the academy did not intimidate Quiterio and wearing a uniform in the Reserves helped

her assimilate into the military culture of the academy.

While the physical training in the curriculum is not a requirement for Quiterio as a civilian, she endorses full participation in that important aspect of academy.

"I chose to participate in wellness not only to improve my own level of physical fitness and to relieve stress, but also to enjoy the esprit de corps that wellness generates," Quiterio explained. "I would highly recommend that the future civilian attendees volunteer to participate in wellness."

Her enthusiasm to fully involve herself in the coursework with her fellow students may have had a role in her acceptance as just another student and in her experience at the academy. Being a "first," she said, hasn't troubled her beyond the first day the class members entered the academy auditorium.

"The only time that I have felt a little awkward was on the first morning when we gathered in the auditorium, and I was the only person in civilian clothes," Quiterio said.



Photo by Todd Berenger

DOD civilian Marisa Quiterioof the is the first of seven civilians attending an Air Force Materiel Command pilot program at the Kirtland NCO Academy and at the Robins AFB, Ga., academy. "Ms. Q," as she was dubbed during the training, stands at attention during open ranks uniform inspection of academy students. Quiterio, who graduated Dec. 18 from the academy, participated in all aspects, including Wellness, of the academy program.

"(Academy leadership) and Class 04-1 treat me like any other student," she said. "(Sargent) welcomed the class and informed them of the pilot program. Since then, I've been a student (like everyone else)."

Master Sgt. Karen Halvorson, Academy Resource Manager, said, "...as with anything new to people, we expected reluctance (from the students). We got exactly the opposite from everyone--the military students welcomed Marisa with open arms. She instantly fit right in."

Sousa added, "Her flight members embraced her from the very beginning...her active duty counterparts tried even harder to relate things to civilian ideas for her, so much so that they even added her to their group goals."

One of their goals was to be "a positive influence on current and future civilian personnel who will attend (Professional Military Education) classes," Sousa said. "Her presence throughout this course has allowed for deeper analysis of many curriculum subjects. Not only did she provide a different point

of view, she forced others to see things from a different perspective."

Quiterio is not "pure civilian," Sargent said, so future candidates with no prior experience in a military capacity will be the "real test" of the pilot program.

Along with the challenge of academy attendance, Quiterio is also attending local college classes. In January, following academy graduation, she reports for her Individual Mobilization Augmentee assignment in Germany.

As the academy's Class 04-1 graduated yesterday, Quiterio was among them, and a new opening for a civilian starts the cycle again.

During this first year in the pilot program, civilians selected to attend the academy are being chosen from Kirtland AFB units. But in the future, civilians will be able to take temporary duty to attend from other installations.

In the pilot program, six more civilians will be able to attend the NCO Academy over the course of the next year. Contact the Civilian Personnel office for application information.

Red Cross continues tradition of serving military

BY 2ND LT. MICHELLE ESTEP

377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

The American Red Cross has a long history of providing service to member's of America's military and their families in times of war.

Recently, that service has been provided during conflicts, peacekeeping, peacemaking and humanitarian operations.

Beginning in the mid-1800s the organization's founder, Clara Barton, risked her life on the battlefields of the Civil War to tend to fallen soldiers. The services she gave were "pilot activities" foreshadowing the great volunteer services that would later be provided by the American Red Cross.

Barton nursed the wounded, wrote letters from the soldiers to their families and kept the morale of the troops high. In 1881, Barton founded the American Red Cross.

Today, the Red Cross is keeping

pace with the changing military. Using the latest in computer and telecommunications technology, the Red Cross allows military members stationed all over the world to send messages to loved ones back home during an emergency or other important events.

These communications are delivered around-the-clock, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

While serving 1.4 million active duty personnel, the Red Cross also reaches out to the 1.5 million members of the National Guard and the Reserves who reside in nearly every local community in America. Red Cross personnel serve in nearly 1,000 chapters in the United States, on 109 military installations around the world and alongside our troops in Iraq, Kuwait, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Members of TEAM KIRTLAND don't have to be actively deployed to benefit from American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services. The Red Cross volunteers and personnel want military members and their families to get to know them before they need them.

All too often, Airmen don't know about available Red Cross services until they are mobilized. Knowing in advance that communication links and access to financial assistance and counseling will be available in an emergency brings peace of mind to the military and their families from which they are separated. Similarly, knowing that Red Cross services are available to inactive members and their families provide a safety net in times of need.

Deborah Gullo, Mid-Rio Grande Chapter director says the local Red Cross is pleased to be of service to New Mexico's military members and their loved ones.

"In the last year, our chapter has provided 1,127 individual services to military families in the Central New Mexico area. Over 100 of those families were Air Force."

Through the Red Cross office on Kirtland AFB, the volunteer staff provides briefings, attends newcomer fairs and sends care packages to deployed Airmen. Red Cross volunteers also provide comfort to family support groups.

For help during inactive duty, members of the military and their families should contact their local Red Cross chapter. When on active duty and serving on a military installation, service members can get Red Cross assistance by calling their base operator.

The Kirtland AFB Red Cross can be reached at 846-5564; outside of normal duty hours they can be reached through the Kirtland AFB Command Post, 846-3777 or 846-3778. The Albuquerque Red Cross phone number is 265-8514.

Tax statements available on myPay

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFPN)–Defense Finance and Accounting Service officials have compiled a schedule of dates when servicemembers, military retirees and annuitants and defense civilian employees can access their tax statements through myPay.

Military members and DOD civilian employees will have access to view, save and print their tax statements from myPay at https://mypay.dfas.mil.

For assistance, call myPay customer support at 800-390-2348.

MyPay provides a secure method for users to manage their pay account information, officials said. Available around the clock, customers can make changes online, instead of visiting a finance office. Officials are projecting the tax statements will be posted on myPay during the following periods.

- ★ Military annuitants: Dec. 13 to 18
- ★ DOD civilians: Dec. 24 to 29
- * Army, Air Force and Navy reserve components: Dec. 26 to Jan. 1
 - ★ Military retirees: Jan. 1 to 5
- ★ Marine Corps active duty and Reserve: Jan. 13 to 21
- ★ Army, Air Force and Navy active duty: Jan. 16 to 26

Pat Shine, director of DFAS' military and civilian pay services business line, said, "Timely access to W-2s and other tax statements is another way myPay gives users control of their pay information."

4 Kirtland AFB Airmen Receive Article 15, UCMJ, punishment

BY STAFF SGT. MIRNA HERRAN

377th Air Base Wing Staff Judge Advocate Office

★ An airman first class from the 377th Security Forces Squadron was charged with violating a general order by wrongfully carrying a concealed privately owned weapon. He received a suspended reduction to the grade of airman and restriction to Kirtland AFB for 10 days.

★ A senior airman from the 58th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron was charged with drunk driving. He received a suspended reduction to the grade of airman first class, forfeitures of \$400 pay per month for two months

and 45 days extra duty.

- ★ An airman from the 377th Security Forces Squadron was charged with dereliction of duty for sleeping on post and for failing to keep his partner awake while on post. He received a suspended reduction to the grade of airman basic.
- ★ A lieutanant colonel assigned to the 377th Air Base Wing was charged with violating the Joint Ethics Regulation for borrowing money from his subordinates, filing a false travel voucher, and wrongfully using a government computer for personal use. He voluntarily repaid the travel overpayment and all money borrowed. He received forfeiture of \$823 pay and a reprimand.